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FM REO BASRAH

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INFO RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

RUCNRAO/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

RUEHBC/REO BASRAH 0308

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SUBJECT: FOLLOWING VIOLENCE, SUNNI MOSQUES IN BASRAH CLOSE

¶1. (SBU) On April 5, the Basrah branch of the Sunni Endowment issued an official statement (Administrative Notice No. 931) addressed to all Sunni imams and clerics in Basrah to close all Sunni mosques for two days because of the rising sectarian violence in the city. Sunni mosques are to be closed on Wednesday, April 5, and Thursday, April 6, and reopen on April ¶7. To the best of our knowledge, all Sunni mosques have complied with this request and have been closed all day on April ¶5. This is the first time that Sunni mosques have closed in Basrah.

¶2. (SBU) An unofficial translation of the text of the Diwan Sunni Endowment statement is as follows:

"It has been decided to close mosques on Wednesday and Thursday. Only the call for prayers will be announced; however, no one will pray inside the mosques. This is in protest to the shedding of blood of our innocent citizens in our province. Please comply. Whoever violates this announcement will be held accountable."

Signed, Dr. Abid Al Kareem Al Khazraji, Southern Region Director of the Sunni Endowment

¶3. (SBU) This statement follows a rash of high-profile Sunni murders in Basrah that have been reported in local media: on April 4, Sadah Aziz, a Sunni professor was kidnapped and killed; on April 3, a family of six Sunnis, including a four year-old boy, were gunned down in a central marketplace; also on April 3, a Sunni imam was shot in his house; and on March 30, a female Sunni lawyer was shot on the streets of Basrah.

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